

## Conversation Contents

**Draft Response to Senator Tina Smith's letter regarding proposed Superior National Forest withdrawal**

**Attachments:**

/12. Draft Response to Senator Tina Smith's letter regarding proposed Superior National Forest withdrawal/1.1 DTS.15176.incoming.SenatorSmith.SNF.Withdrawal.27June2018.pdf  
/12. Draft Response to Senator Tina Smith's letter regarding proposed Superior National Forest withdrawal/1.2  
DTS.15176.response.SenatorTinaSmith.SNF.Withdrawal.9July2018.docx

**"Fink, Elena" <efink@blm.gov>**

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**From:** "Fink, Elena" <efink@[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Mon Jul 09 2018 13:00:41 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Francis Piccoli <fpiccoli@[REDACTED]>, Barbara Eggers <beggars@[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** Draft Response to Senator Tina Smith's letter regarding proposed Superior National Forest withdrawal  
**Attachments:** DTS.15176.incoming.SenatorSmith.SNF.Withdrawal.27June2018.pdf  
DTS.15176.response.SenatorTinaSmith.SNF.Withdrawal.9July2018.docx

Hello Barbara, Francis,

I just uploaded the draft response letter to Senator Smith in DTS (BLM...15176) for your review and surname. Copies attached as well.

All best,  
*Elena Fink*  
Deputy State Director, Natural Resources  
Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States  
[REDACTED] desk; [REDACTED] cell

## United States Senate

June 27, 2018

Deputy Director Brian Steed  
Bureau of Land Management  
1849 C Street NW, Rm. 5665  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Deputy Director Steed,

In January 2017, the USDA Forest Service Region 9 Forester in Milwaukee requested a mineral segregation and withdrawal of 234,328 acres within Superior National Forest. The Federal lands covered by the request are within the Rainy River watershed and drain into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). The request for withdrawal initiated a study period that will end in January 2019. The Forest Service is currently conducting an environmental assessment and compiling several ancillary reports that will guide a final decision on the proposed withdrawal by the Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

On June 20, 2018, at a round table discussion and then again at a rally in Duluth, Minnesota, President Trump made comments implying that the request for a segregation and withdrawal would be rejected. I have heard from Minnesotans who are concerned that regular process has been short-circuited and the outcome of the review process predetermined.

Having heard the concerns of my constituents, I have two requests for you and your counterpart at the Forest Service. First, I would like the environmental assessment and ancillary reports to be released to the public at the same time they are conveyed to BLM. Second, I am requesting a 30 day public comment period once the assessment and reports are completed and prior to any formal decision on the withdrawal application.

Mining is an important tradition in northeastern Minnesota and an ongoing source of good jobs. At the same time, the BWCAW is a fragile and irreplaceable resource, the value of which was eloquently described in a letter from former USDA Forest Service Chief Tidwell to BLM Director Kornze in December 2016. The Superior National Forest (which contains the BWCAW) holds 20 percent of National Forest System's fresh water supply. The decision making process regarding the proposed withdrawal must be thorough, complete, and unbiased—we as a country cannot afford to get this one wrong. Thank you for your consideration of my request. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



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Tina Smith  
United States Senator

The Honorable Tina Smith  
Congress of the United States  
United States Senate  
Hart Senate office Building, Suite SH-309  
Washington D.C. 20510-2310

Dear Senator Smith:

Thank you for your letter dated June 27, 2018, requesting that the environmental assessment and ancillary reports be released to the public at the same time they are conveyed to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and a 30-day comment period be conducted once the assessment and reports are completed prior to any formal decision on the proposed 20-year withdrawal from mineral leasing on 234,328 acres of Superior National Forest lands in northeastern Minnesota. I appreciate that you took the time to share your views.

We can all agree that the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is a special place that is worthy of protection, as outlined in Public Law 95-495. The United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS) and the BLM are directed to minimize, to the maximum extent possible, the environmental impacts associated with mineral development outside of the wilderness area and the adjacent Mining Protection Area. In coordination with the USFS, the BLM is committed to conducting a careful review of all available information that will help inform the Department of the Interior Secretary's decision on the USFS's proposed withdrawal. We expect the environmental assessment to be completed by late this year, at which time it will be made available to the public.

I hope this information is helpful, and I look forward to continuing to work with you in the management of our public lands and its resources.

Sincerely,

Brian Steed  
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